

## Communication Tips

Communication is sharing of ideas, feelings or information with others, usually by listening and speaking. For persons with a hearing loss, speech may not be understandable. Speech reading can be a helpful tool, but communication may still be difficult. Ideas to assist you in challenging communication situations are found below.

### Managing Noisy Situations

Hearing aids pick up all sound within range, noise as well as speech. Noise can make communication almost impossible. What can you do?

- Let the speaker know you are having trouble hearing because of background noise.
- If possible remove the source of the noise.
- Suggest a quieter place to communicate.
- Avoid rooms with poor acoustics, such as rooms with hard walls or no carpeting.
- Proper seating is important. Avoid sitting near hard walls and other hard surfaces.
- Special listening devices allow the speakers voice to be made louder and may be installed in meeting rooms and auditoriums.
- Some noise, like airplane noise, starts and stops. It is a good idea to stop conversation until this kind of noise stops.

### Managing Group Situations

Understanding conversation in a group is very difficult for a person with a hearing loss. The conversation may jump quickly from person to person. By the time you identify the new speaker, much of the conversation may be lost. Some speakers may not be visible because of physical location. Here are some helpful strategies to deal with group settings:

- Ask in advance for copies of materials to familiarize yourself with the topic.
- Arrange for someone to take notes for you at a meeting or lecture.
- Ask others to face you when talking.
- Ask speakers to raise a finger or hand before they begin talking.
- In a large meeting, ask the persons speaking to stand.
- If the speaker is too far away, move closer.
- Lighting should be directly overhead or slightly in front of the speaker.
- Request an assistive listening device.
- Ask the group leader or another person to indicate when the topic changes.
- Choose seating that allows you to see the maximum number of people possible.

### When you do not understand something

Sometimes you simply do not understand what a person is saying. Many people use repetition to solve this problem. There are other ways to clarify a misunderstanding:

- Repeat the part of the sentence that you did understand and ask the speaker to supply the rest.
- Say, "I am sorry, I do not understand. Can you say it another way?"

- If you do not understand a specific word you can ask the speaker to spell or write it.
- If you do not understand the spoken letter, clarify by using a code word such as "A - as in apple."
- If you are having trouble understanding a spoken number, ask the speaker to give the number one digit at a time or count from zero to the correct number.

### **Some Other Tactics...**

#### **Be Interested and Interesting.**

- Keep up on current events.
- Keep up with your friends' interests.
- Develop your own interests and hobbies and share them with your friends.
- These things will make you better prepared to understand most conversations. In addition, people will want to talk with you and will make the effort to communicate.

#### **Be Prepared.**

- When you go to a movie or play, read the review or summary of the plot in advance.
- Always think about how you can keep communication going.

#### **Be Observant.**

- Watch everything about the speaker.
- Watch the facial expressions and body language.

#### **Be Honest and Assertive.**

- Do not pretend to understand when you are really confused.

#### **Keep Your Sense of Humor.**

- Even when you make a mistake and feel foolish, your willingness to laugh at yourself will help everyone to relax and feel comfortable.

Source: *Communication Tips: For Adults With Hearing Loss*. National Information Center on Deafness.